Introduction to the Scientific Study of Language

Linguistics/Anthropology 200
CRN 20538

Rice University, Spring 2015

Meeting: T-TH 1:00-2:15

Instructor: Dr. Mark Gibson
Office: 208 Herring Hall
Office Hours: Tues. 8-10 or by appointment
E-mail: mark.a.gibson@rice.edu[1]
Office Phone: (713) 348-6164

Bazile Lanneau (TA): bazilelanneau@gmail.com
Jonas Wittke (TA): jonaswittke@gmail.com

Course Description

This foundation course serves as an introduction to the scientific study of language. Located at the crossroads of the sciences and the humanities, linguistics is a highly interdisciplinary field with connections to anthropology, sociology, social psychology, physics, cognitive science, neuroscience, physiology, literature, history, computer science, speech technology, speech pathology, education, language teaching, philosophy, gender studies, law, international studies, political science, human development, and many other topics.

In this course, we explore a variety of topics including the ways in which linguists analyze and describe language, what we "know" when we use a language, and what language reveals about human beings and human culture. Throughout our exploration we investigate many facets of language including how words are related to each other, what word meaning reveals about the mind (lexical and cognitive semantics), how words are built up from smaller parts (morphology), and the structure of sentences (syntax). We also investigate the sounds of language, including the physiology of speech sounds and the vocal tract (articulatory phonetics), and how speech sounds are organized systematically (phonology). Because language is a social phenomenon, we study some of the social aspects that are related to language structure and use including language variation and change (sociolinguistics and historical linguistics), the relationship between language, society and individual speech choices, and the systematic ways in which languages change over time. We also explore how language is acquired, principles that motivate the structure of conversation, and comparisons between languages. Students will gain experience with hands-on data analysis from a number of languages, including English, and will apply concepts learned in this course to their own research project.

Teaching Assistants

You will be assigned a Teaching Assistant (TA), based on the initial letters of your last name. You will have the same TA throughout the semester, so he or she will have a chance to get to know you and your work. Your assigned TA should be your first point-of-contact for questions and concerns. You are welcome (and encouraged) to come to any posted office hours whether or not you are assigned to that particular TA. Of course, you are also always welcome to come to my posted office hours as well.

[1] E-mail is an excellent way to contact me. Please be advised that I may not reply to your email immediately. I check and respond to student e-mails once a day during my e-mail "office hour". I also may not check email on weekends.

Course Web Site

You will find announcements, handouts, supplementary readings, project guidelines, and assignments on our Owl-Space site. TAs will enter grades on this site as well. Additionally, we will post links to (potentially useful and interesting) resources about language and linguistics. If you run into trouble with Owl-Space, please contact your college computer associates or the helpdesk in Mudd Hall.

Required Materials

Finegan, Edward. 2012. *Language: Its Structure and Use*, 6th ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth.

The textbook is available online or through Rice Campus Bookstore.

Classroom Culture

Please be punctual. Please silence phones, pagers, and other electronic devices. Please refrain from talking while someone else has the floor.

Regular class attendance and active participation is essential for mastery of the material—your overall course grade will correlate to your patterns of attendance and participation.

Lectures will parallel the readings but will not necessarily cover the same material. You are responsible for all material covered in readings and lectures. I recommend that you read the assigned material for each class before the lecture.

It is your responsibility to obtain notes from missed lectures. Lecture slides will not be posted on Owl-Space, so you will need to take notes. I understand that some of you prefer to take notes on your laptop. I request that individuals using computers during class sit in the front rows of the class. I forbid texting and web surfing during lecture. If I see that you are using your computer to do something other than take notes, I will ask you to leave.

Grading

Homework (top 8 scores of 9 homework assignments)	40%
Research Projects	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%
TOTAL	**100%**

Grade Assessment

Final grades will be assessed as follows:

A+	98-100%	B+	88-89%			
A	94-97%	B	84-87%	…	F	below 60%
A-	90-93%	B-	80-83%			

Grades are calculated based on points earned for each assignment (refer to individual handouts of assignment instructions). Grades are not rounded up (i.e. 89.987 = B+).

Homework (8 x 5% = 40%)

There are nine homework assignments for this class (due dates can be found on the course schedule). The lowest score of the nine assignments will be dropped, thus leaving eight scores to be calculated into your overall course grade. Each assignment is worth 5% of your course grade. Because you have one "free" assignment, **late homework will not be accepted under any**

circumstances. Homework must be submitted at the end of class on the day it is due to be considered for a grade.

Research Projects (2 x 5% = 10%)
You will complete two research projects that are related to linguistics. Each project will allow you to explore topics relevant to linguistic study which interest you as an individual. Guidelines will be provided in an online handout. Due dates can be found on the course schedule.

Exams (20% + 30% = 50%)
There are two exams for this course: a midterm (worth 20% of your overall grade) and a final (worth 30% of your overall grade). The midterm will cover the lectures from the first seven weeks of class; the final will be cumulative. Each exam will contain questions that test your knowledge of material from class lectures, assigned readings, homework assignments, and course handouts. Each assessment will be closed note and closed book (i.e. You may not refer to the text, class notes, or any other source while taking exams).

No make-up exams will be given unless there are compelling circumstances. In this case, you must notify me in advance of the exam time, or as soon as humanly possible after the event that has impeded you from sitting the exam. Adequate written documentation for your excuse must be provided (e.g. a note from your Resident Associate, College Master, or physician).

Special Accommodations

Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will also need to contact Disability Support Services in room 111 of the Allen Center.

Honor Policy

There are a variety of actions that constitute cheating and violate the honor code. Following are a few things that are in violation of the Honor Code. This is not a complete list. Please refer to http://honor.rice.edu/ for a complete list.

- Presenting the work of another as your own.
- Referring to notes, homework or exams from previous semesters.
- Changing data or results to make your analysis tidy.

If you are caught or are suspected of cheating, you will be referred to the Honor Council. If you are unsure about whether a specific action is cheating, please check with your TA or me.

Some general guidelines for this course are:

- **Do not** look at notes, problems or exams from previous semesters.
- **Do not** seek solutions to problems from other outside sources (e.g. books, Internet, etc).
- **Do not** copy other (current or former) students' homework assignments.
- **Do not** falsify data or other results in your research project.
- **Do** form study groups to talk about readings and lectures and to analyze and work through homework problems. Write up your homework assignment on your own.
- **Do** cite all sources used (including those found online), and cite and designate all quotations as such.

Ling/Anth 200

Introduction to the Scientific Study of Language

Course Schedule

Spring 2015-Gibson

The schedule presented here is subject to change as circumstances require.

Week	Topic	Readings	Due
1	**Introduction**		
	Course introduction		
	What is linguistics?	Ch. 1	
	Part I: Why do you talk like that?		
	Variation: Register and style I	Ch. 10	
2	Variation: Register and style II & Phonetics 1	Ch. 3	
	Phonetics 2		
	Phonetics 3		HW 1
3	Variation: Dialects		
	Variation: Dialects	Ch. 11	
	Variation: Sociolects		HW 2
4	**Part II: Structure of Language**		
	Variation		
	Variation		
	Morphology 1	Ch. 2	HW 3
5	Morphology 2		
	Phonology 1	Ch. 4	
	Phonology 2		HW 4
6	Phonology 3		
	Syntax 1	Ch. 5	
	Syntax 2		HW 5
7	Syntax 3		
	Review		
	MIDTERM EXAM (Lectures 1-18)	Ch. 1-5, 10-11	

Week	Topic	Readings	Due
8	**Spring Vacation**		
9	**Part III: Language Structures (continued) and Modality**		
	Semantics 1	Ch. 6	
	Semantics 2		Report 1
	Midterm Recess		
10	**Part IV: Describing and Documenting a Language**		
	Language shift, death, and revitalization	TBA	
	Language description and documentation	TBA	
	Video (Endangered Lgs)		HW 7
11	**Part V: Language Use**		
	Discourse 1	Ch. 9	
	Discourse 2		
	Part VI: How Do We Acquire Language?		
	Language Acquisition 1	Ch. 14	
12	Language Acquisition 2		
	Part VI: Comparing Languages In Space And Time		
	Language Acquisition 3		
	Historical linguistics 1	Ch. 12	HW 8
13	Historical linguistics 2		
	Languages in contact		
	Pidgins & Creoles		HW 9
14	History of English	Ch. 13	
	Video (Nova)		
15	History of writing	TBA	
	Wrap-up		
	Review		Report 2